The Portfolio Connection

Newsletter

November, 1993 - February, 1994 Vol 2 Issue Nos. 5/6 DOUBLE ISSUE!

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We're Back!

But Bowing Out Soon...

First An Apology...

...to all of you who have been waiting patiently for an issue since last September. The reason? Well, *The Portfolio Connection* has always been a labour of love, carried out in our spare time. Over the last year the availability of Portfolio accessories in the UK has become increasingly scarce and we spent a lot of time trying to find alternate sources.

Those of you who have been using *The Portfolio Connection* for some time will know that we pride ourselves on our speed of service. Many of our orders are dispatched the same day and even those we have had to order specially, we are usually still able to deliver promptly.

With the decline in availability of Portfolio accessories it is now well-nigh impossible for us to maintain this efficiency. An example is some parallel interfaces we ordered from a UK supplier—after two months of promises, we eventually imported them from America. The additional strain on our already limited spare time proved too much—and the Newsletter suffered as a result.

However, rather than rush out a sub-standard issue we wanted to do the job properly, hence the delay, so here at last is a double issue—we hope you like it now its here.

Monday 10th October, 1994 - Make a Note in Your Portfolio Diary!

Due to the difficulties mentioned above and the fact that we shall shortly be moving to America, we have decided—with real regret—that the time has come at last to uncouple *The Portfolio Connection*.

As a result, our last trading day will be **Monday 10th October**. We have some real bargains on offer as a result of our closing down (see Page 12), but we guess you'll have to be quick to snap them up! Until 10th October, all of our library sets will be available for just £2.00 a set (including VAT & P+P) so this could be your last chance to get those programs you've been meaning to.

But, hurry, you only have until Monday 10th October—and that isn't very long!

New Temporary Address & Phone No.

Until Monday 10th October, send your orders to our new address:

The Portfolio Connection
P.O. Box 97
Wallingford
Oxfordshire OX10 0EB
Tel: (0491) 833312

As usual, if you telephone you are likely to reach our answerphone—please be patient with it, we will try to get back to you as soon as we can!

Existing Subscriptions Will be Honoured

Although we are closing down the Hardware, Software and Shareware sections of *The Portfolio Connection*, we will continue to produce the Newsletter until all current subscriptions expire, (perhaps longer if there is an interest for it).

We have missed out Vol. 2 Issue 4 to synchronise with the double-issue format we will be using from here on but you will not miss out on a single issue—you may even gain an additional issue!

And Finally...

When I bought my Portfolio, over four years ago, I was really impressed with the machine (and still am!) but frustrated at the lack of both useful and reasonably-priced software for the machine. At one point, I nearly sold my Port, but instead I invested a considerable amount of time and energy collecting PD & Shareware programs for the Portfolio from all over the world. My efforts were not wasted as I discovered some of the excellent programs available written specifically for the Port.

As I was sure there were other UK Portfolio Users like me, I set up *The Portfolio Connection* to make these programs available. The subsequent popularity of *The Portfolio Connection* showed that I was right and we have since spread beyond the UK to Germany, Italy, Holland, Australia and USA to name but a few.

We now have around 1000 Portfolio files and the programs are still coming. Some of the excellent new programs on Pages 6 and 11 are proof of that. We feel it would be a great shame if these programs were no longer easily accessible to Portfolio Users.

So, if you are interested in taking over the Shareware Section of *The Portfolio Connection*, get in touch with us as soon as possible!

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NEWS

Gloomy news first regarding the production of Portfolio accessories, but there is good news too…

Compax Wind Down Portfolio Products

Compax have announced that they are going to cease production of their Portfolio software and accessories. They put this down to the dwindling Portfolio market in Australia. They are selling off their existing software sets and will only make Compax cards for orders of 500 or over.

This is a disappointment when we have only recently discovered their excellent 128k Advanced Memory Cards but comes as no surprise given the general situation regarding the Portfolio market.

BSE Cease Production of the Universal I/O Interface

Another blow was dealt to the Portfolio community by the shock announcement that BSE are no longer producing their excellent Universal I/O Interface for the Portfolio. A spokesman for the company blamed the steep rise in component prices coupled with insufficient demand for the product.

This is a very great shame as the Universal I/O Interface was arguably one of the most useful peripherals available for the Portfolio. However, the good news is that BSE will continue to supply the Flashdrive hard disk units for the Portfolio.

Optrol Deliver Multi-Megabyte Portfolio Flashcard Storage As Promised

On a brighter note, the American company, Optrol, have kept their promise to produce high capacity Flash Memory storage for the Portfolio. Originally announced in Vol 1 - Issue 4 of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter, these high capacity cards were delayed for a year due to a lack of the necessary high capacity flash ram chips.

The cards are now available in 1mb, 2mb and a staggering 4mb size. Prices will be approximately as follows:

1Mb	**$189**
2Mb	**$269**
4Mb	**$409**

These prices include a $10 shipping charge. In addition, you may be liable to 6% import charge as well as VAT at 17.5%. The 512k card has now been discontinued. To Optrol's credit, not only have they managed to deliver these cards as promised but have also held the prices to those originally promised—that's no mean achievement in the current economic climate!

Although the prices may seem steep, they compare very favourably to other available forms of memory card storage for the Portfolio. The standard Atari 128k card works out at 90p per kilobyte of storage and the Compax 128k card at 62p per kilobyte. Compare this to the Optrol price of about 16p per kilobyte for the 1Mb flashcard down to about 9p per kilobyte for the 4Mb flashcard. Put this way, the Optrol cards provide excellent value for those of you who need high-capacity but compact storage for your Portfolio. You can obtain more details on these big storage cards for the Portfolio by contacting:

Optrol Inc.
P.O. Box 37157
Raleigh NC 27627
USA
Tel: (919) 779-3377

Czechoslovakian Floppy Disk Drive

One of our German subscribers, Wolf-Theo Holl, contacted us with some exciting news on a Floppy Disk Drive for the Portfolio from the Czech company ABAK. This is what he had to say about it:

> I've got some interesting news to tell: That Port-Drive FDD is definitely the most useful and well engineered extension for the Portfolio I've ever seen! I saw it on a Computer Show called Hobby-Tronik here in Germany.
>
> It's "just" one of these superslim external notebook FDDs and it's not bulky at all! Even with the small external Nicad package (7V, 500mA), which comes with the drive and allows to use it on the road, it is still possible to use that combination for about 3-4 hours without additional power. There is also a parallel port at the back of the drive!
>
> That all sounds great, but the sophisticated job was done by the programmer who wrote the driver software. He used a Write Back algorithm to get a variable cache for the access (read and write) of the drive. Of course it's all done in Assembler… He's also written a "small" routine to enable the user to create sub-directories on the disk, which seems to be a bit tricky with the standard DIP-Dos commands. When the drive receives a MD command, the driver is used as a kind of filter to send the FDD the correct code to <M>ake a <D>irectory. Besides all that the Port-Drive is rather faster in doing it's job. (Much faster than my DiskFolio interface/drive!)

Well, it certainly does sound interesting and also impressive! We'll be sure to let you know when we have more information on it.

Re:Port Update

The last two issues of Re:Port have contained a number of interesting programs including WinPGC—a program to manipulate PGC graphics files in Windows on your PC; Mines—a variation of the ever-popular 'Minefield' game; Meet—a utility to quickly enter appointments into the Portfolio Diary and Find—a program to find a text search string in any file on your Portfolio. This is supplemented by the usual news and reviews.

You can buy a year's subscription of Re:Port (6 bi-monthly issues) directly from America for $55 but to save the hassle involved, we have arranged with David to distribute Re:Port here in Britain. One year's subscription costs just £40 including P+P—contact *The Portfolio Connection* for details. Please note that prices may be subject to change without notice due to fluctuations in the exchange rate.

/Cont. on Page 3

NEWS continued

Upgrade Manual Now Available...

Back in Vol 2, Issue 2 of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter (May/June, 1993) we brought you the first news of an exciting new DIY upgrade being developed for the Portfolio in Germany. This was to include instructions for upgrading the internal RAM and increasing the clock speed so that the Portfolio would run faster.

We are pleased to report that the manual is now available and is even better than expected!

The 22 page upgrade manual, which includes two full colour photographs, has been written by German author Stefan Kächele and translated by Wolf-Theo Holl. Instructions are included to carry out the following modifications:

- Upgrading internal memory of your Portfolio to 224k, 320k or 512k RAM.
- Increasing clock speed of your Portfolio from 4.9MHz to 6.5MHz
- Adding internal power back-up (without batteries) for 48 hours or more.
- Using the parallel peripheral as an I/O interface with the help of PBasic. Up to 17 lines are available without modification of the parallel peripheral (configured as 1 x 8, 1 x 4 and 1 x 5 data lines). A small modification to the peripheral will give you 24 lines (configured as 3 x 8 data lines).

The manual is well laid out, with a chapter for each part of the upgrade. The translation is good and each aspect is covered in a step-by-step manner. A number of schematics and diagrams are included to give a clear description of wiring changes and location of additional components. You can tell the manual has been written from a 'hands-on' point of view and throughout the text are numerous tips to make the whole process easier. Advice is given on the right tools for the job and a number of fault-finding and trouble-shooting points are included.

In Vol 2, Issue 2 of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter we reported that the price for the manual would be about £20 but Stefan Kächele has improved on this—the £20 for the manual includes a 6.5MHz quartz (for increasing the clock speed) AND carriage within Europe! This represents excellent value for money. 128k RAM chips can also be supplied at £10 each.

The upgrade manual has to be ordered direct from Germany but to make it easier for you we have included an order form with this issue of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter. Payment is easy if you send a EuroCheque.

One word of warning - the upgrade is technically very delicate and involves fine use of a soldering iron so is NOT for anyone who is inexperienced in the field of electronics. Also tampering with your Portfolio will invalidate any warranty. However, you may be able to find someone who can perform the upgrade for you and we will be looking to see if we can find somebody who would be prepared to carry out the upgrade for our customers (for a suitable fee).

...and New Cheaper Memory Cards!

More news from our good friend Wolf-Theo Holl on some specially designed memory cards for the Portfolio. As you will see, the cards are very economical which is something most Portfolio users have been wanting for some time. here is what Wolf-Theo has to say:

> Good news for all Port users! About half a year ago some German Portfolio users, (with Upgrade Guide's author Stefan Kächele in particular) decided to build a low cost RAM card after it had become impossible to get some new "original" cards (at least here in Germany). The idea appeared during the work on the Portfolio Upgrade Guide, when a new kind of low-power chip was tested for the internal memory upgrade.
>
> With Andreas Göbel, a young electronic engineer (who had never seen a Portfolio before ;-)), the right man to develop the cards was found real soon and appeared to be very interested in this new challenge.
>
> According to the Port's hardware specifications he designed two types of RAM cards. One card comes with a small lithium battery to maintain data for at least a year when the card is removed from the Portfolio. This card appears to be the right choice for people who use several cards and tend to change them quite often.
>
> The other card uses a special type of (built-in) capacitor which is powered, or rather recharged, by the Portfolio, even if the "low-battery" message has already appeared (This message just indicates that there is not enough power left to run the display. The internal RAMs and a memory card are still powered for some time). Whenever this card is taken off the Portfolio, data is maintained for at least 48 hours. This card is ideal for users who do not use other RAM cards and leave it in the Port most of the time.
>
> With both cards you can choose just the capacity of memory storage you actually need. Both cards have been designed to take up either one, two or three 128K chips. They can be used just like a standard A: drive, but with one important difference: the chips are NOT connected with a logic chip but need to be selected by small dip switches. In other words, on a 3x128K card you get 384K to store your data, but you can only access one chip at a time [*This would just be like having three standard 128k cards, but with them all in the Portfolio at the same time - Ed*].
>
> What appears to be a major drawback at the first sight does make sense when you take a look at the prices of custom RAM cards. One thing that makes them expensive is all the additional stuff that needs to be on the cards to make them appear to DOS just a like "normal" disk drive.

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NEWS continued

New Cheaper Memory Cards cont...

But the idea was to provide one of the cheapest "port"able machines with a real low-cost RAM card, so that at least this feature of a standard card had to be sacrificed. (Remember the Port's CLIPBOARD to transfer data between the applications and between the different drives...)

Important: It is NECESSARY to "switch off" the cards with their dip switches whenever they are not in use to avoid the capacitor or the battery being drained rapidly!

Apart from this slight inconvenience the cards react just like the custom cards. They are fast, reliable, don't have to be cleaned by a driver program [*as do Optrol's Flash Ram Cards - Ed*] and, of course, they are the same size as the "originals".

Each card fits completely into the Portfolio's card slot. On the lower left corner (the one that sticks out of the Port) are the small switches (and on the capacitor card a tiny cabinet to take up the "Gold-Cap").

The approximate prices are as follows:

Capacitor cards:	1 x 128K :	£55
	2 x 128K :	£65
	3 x 128K :	£78
Battery cards:	1 x 128K :	£60
	2 x 128K :	£70
	3 x 128K :	£85

There may be VAT at 17.5% to add to these prices but even then, they still represent excellent value for money. Delivery time will be approximately 2 - 4 weeks. Here at *The Portfolio Connection* we are very excited about these new cards which look as though they will provide some of the cheapest Portfolio storage available so far. We have managed to get our hands on a sample and you can see our full review on Page 10 of this issue. Along with the Portfolio Upgrade Pack these cards can be obtained from Stefan Kächele (see Page 16).

Parallel ST Transfer - Good News!

We have, as yet, no further news on the commercial parallel ST transfer programs ST Link and FolioTalk. What we do have is some good news regarding the shareware ST-Folio program available in Set ST3 from our library. ST-Folio is the shareware forerunner of the commercial ST Link program, but suffered (or so we thought) from a couple of drawbacks.

First, we had heard that the 74HC125 integrated circuit needed for the special parallel link cable was no longer available. However, after reporting this in the last issue of the newsletter, we received a number of letters and phone calls from subscribers saying that the part was still available. Thanks to all of you who contacted us—for more information, see the letter from John Mayo on the letters page.

The second problem was that, although one of our readers had managed to get ST-Folio working using the cable which was supplied with ST Link, no-one had managed to succeed with the cable built to the instructions in the ST-Folio documentation.

However, thanks to the efforts of another of our readers, Kevin Warrender, this problem has now been solved. Kevin figured out that the original wiring diagram supplied with ST-Folio is wrong and he has now kindly supplied us with corrected documentation. Here is what he has to say about it:

> The original files STFOLI.ASC (wiring hookup) and STFOLIO.PI3 (circuit diagram) are incorrect and this will stop the ST transfer cable from working. I have altered the circuit diagram so it will now work OK. The new file is called STCABLE.PI3. Pins 2 and 3 (data lines) needed crossing and pin 9 on the ST connector should have gone to pin 7 instead. I had a job to get hold of the 74HC125 chip, but in the end I found a supplier for now. If you get stuck give me a ring.
>
> After looking at a lot of data on the 74HC125 and 74LS125 chip I can see no reason not to use the 74LS125 chip instead (as it is readily available), and the HC was meant to be a direct replacement for the LS. If you do use the LS let me know and I will pass on the info. Use shielded cable as it gives better results. You also need DB25 MALE connectors on both sides of the lead - one marked ST and one Portfolio. I have used this lead on my STFM but have not tried it on a MEGA ST. If you have problems loop pins 2, 23, & 24 to pin 25 (ground) on the ST connector ONLY. Without the help of Chris Goodwin it would have taken me a lot longer to sort out - THANKS CHRIS. Thanks also to Werner Zemanek for the original circuit diagram.
>
> The original files say the software is not compatible and will not run with RAINBOW TOS 1.4 because of the OMIKRON compiler BUT I have tried it with an STFM and STE both with TOS 1.4 and it worked with file transfer in both directions OK.

Our thanks go to you Kevin for sorting the ST-Folio problems out both for us and for our customers who own STs. With this information parallel transfer between ST and Portfolio becomes a REAL possibility once more. If you experience difficulties in making the cable, Kevin has kindly agreed to try and answer your queries - he can be contacted on (0302) 780883.

This brings us to the end of our marathon Portfolio News for this issue. As you can see, although the Portfolio may be winding down, there are still plenty of new developments happening - particularly from our friends in Germany. As ever, we'll keep you posted via the *News* section of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter with all the latest developments in the Portfolio world as they happen!

more next issue...

The PBasic Column

This issue we have a selection of program listings kindly sent in by Alan Ogden.

CLOCK.BAS

CLOCK.BAS turns your Port into a simple digital clock which ticks:

```
'Clock by Alan Ogden 31st.Oct 1991
'Thanks to B.J.Gleason for Pbasic
cls
print "          *** Clock ***"
locate 8,12 : print "Atari key to stop";
box 3,7,5,33,1
10 locate 4,8,0 : 'Start loop
print left$(time$,2);
print " Hours ";
print mid$(time$,4,2);
print " Min. ";
print right$(time$,2);
print " Sec. "
click
for d = 1 to 140
next d : 'Delay for 1 sec.
goto 10
end
```

CRSRON.BAS

Alan says of this little program, "I had to turn the cursor off to improve the look of clock.bas and could not think how to turn it on in the program so had to write crsron.bas!"

```
'This program will return the cursor
'to visibility after a Basic command
'to turn it off.
cls
locate 1,1,2
end
```

BESTBUY.BAS

This program will help you decide which is the better buy when choosing between packets of different price and weight. The listing is pretty straightforward but it may be worth mentioning that the question mark (?) placed at the beginning of certain statements is a shortened form of the PRINT command.

```
'Program to find best buy of two packs
gosub 33
3 cls : input "Enter the price (PENCE) item 1 ",p1
gosub 25
input  "Now the weight ",w
w1 = w * c
input "Now the price (P) item 2 ",p2
gosub 25
input "And the weight ",w
w2 = w * c
f1 = p1/w1
f2 = p2/w2
cls
if f1 = f2 then ? "They are equal!" : goto 18
if f1 > f2 then i = 2
if f2 > f1 then i = 1
? "Item" i "is best buy"
18 ? "Want to check another? (Y/N)"
19 a$ = inkey$ : if a$ = "" then 19
if a$ = "y" then goto 3
if a$ = "Y" then goto 3
? "Goodbye from Bestbuy!"
for c = 1 to 300 : next c
cls : end
25 ? "Choose the units"
? "Press k (kilo) l (lb) o (oz) or g (gm)"
27 a$ = inkey$
if a$ = "k" then c = 1000: return
if a$ = "l" then c = 16 * 28.35: return
if a$ = "o" then c = 28.35 : return
if a$ = "g" then c = 1 : return
goto 27
33 cls : ? "This program helps you to work out the"
? "best bargain of two packages, even in"
? "different units of weight. Enter"
? "prices and weights when prompted."
for c = 1 to 600 : next c : return
'Program by Alan Ogden 28th Nov 1991
'Compuserve 100015,426
'Thanks to B J Gleason for PBasic
```

CAROL.BAS

Due to the delay in getting this issue of the newsletter out, this program is not quite as seasonal as it should have been. The same basic program can be used to play any melodies on the Port and is written so that more carols can easily be added:

```
'Christmas carols
'By Alan Ogden Compuserve 100015,426
'Thanks to B J Gleason for PBasic
1 cls
read L : 'Length of carol
if L = 100 then goto 51
read C$ : 'Name of carol
C = len(C$) + 9
box 3,8,5,C,1
locate 4,9,0 : print C$
for x = 1 to L
read n : 'n is note
read d : 'd is duration
if d = 4 then s = 100 : goto 10
if d = 2 then s = 50 : goto 10
s = 25
10 sound n,s
next x
goto 1
19 data 53,"Good King Wenceslas"
20 data 54,1,54,1,54,1,56,1,54,1,54,1,49,2
21 data 51,1,49,1,51,1,53,1,54,2,54,2
22 data 54,1,54,1,54,1,56,1,54,1,54,1,49,2
23 data 51,1,49,1,51,1,53,1,54,2,54,2
24 data 60,1,41,1,58,1,56,1,58,1,56,1,54,2
25 data 51,1,49,1,51,1,53,1,54,2,54,2
```

/cont. on Page 6

The PBasic Column - cont.

CAROL.BAS cont.

```
26 data 49,1,49,1,51,1,53,1,54,1,54,1,56,2
27 data 60,1,41,1,58,1,56,1,54,2,41,2,54,2
28 data 47,"Silent Night"
29 data 57,4,41,1,57,2,54,4
30 data 57,4,41,1,57,2,54,4
31 data 62,4,62,2,60,4
32 data 61,4,61,2,57,4
33 data 41,4,41,2,61,4,60,1,41,2
34 data 57,4,41,1,57,2,54,4
35 data 41,4,41,2,61,4,60,1,41,2
36 data 57,4,41,1,57,2,54,4,52,2
37 data 52,2,52,2,55,2,52,2,49,2,50,4,54,4
38 data 61,2,57,2,54,2,57,2,55,2,52,2,50,4
39 data 52,"Away in a manger"
40 data 57,2,61,2,61,2,62,1,63,1
41 data 61,2,61,2,63,1,4,1,37,2
42 data 37,2,6,2,4,4,62,1,63,1
43 data 4,2,4,2,37,2,63,2,63,2
44 data 61,1,63,1,62,2,41,2,61,2
45 data 60,4,57,2,61,2,61,2,62,1
46 data 63,1,61,2,61,2,63,1,4,1
47 data 37,2,37,2,6,2,4,4,62,1
48 data 63,1,4,2,4,2,37,2,63,2
49 data 63,2,61,1,63,1,62,2,41,2
50 data 60,2,61,4,100
51 locate 1,1,2
?"Have a very happy Christmas!"
end
'Written 13/12/92 Alan Ogden.
```

Send us your PBasic Program Listings

If you have a program you would like to share with other Portfolio users then send us the listing and, if possible, a working copy on 5¼" or 3½" disk. For each contribution used we will give the author a free set from our libraries.

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PBasic (currently version 5.0) is a public domain BASIC interpreter for the Portfolio, written by B J Gleason of The American University.

New This Issue:

This issue sees two new sets and some very exciting new programs added to our existing sets. **Remember that you only have until 10 October to order these programs from us and that they are available at the bargain price of just £2.00 per set!** So hurry and get your order in before it's too late...

New Sets

PC5 - PC Accessories 5

This set contains two exciting new freeware programs from J F Davignon. They are, in essence, a suite of utilities to ease working with and between your Port and your PC.

➢ **Portmanw** - Portman for Windows is a Windows utilities package designed to ease the exchange of data between the Atari Portfolio and personal computers running Microsoft Windows. It has the following outstanding features:

- Point and click shell for ARLINK and FT.COM file transfer utilities
- Exports comma delimited data to the Port's Address Book and Diary
- Export Address book data to comma delimited format
- View Portfolio Graphics (.PGC)
- Convert from ASCII to ANSI character sets and vice-versa
- Unwrap text files wrapped by the Portfolio's editor
- Wrap files destined for the Portfolio's Editor or Address book—No more horizontal scrolling
- View and edit files before processing
- Comprehensive on-line help and tips on exporting data from Lotus Organizer(tm) to the Portfolio

➢ **Portman** - This is an earlier, slightly less comprehensive DOS version of Portman for Windows. It offers three utilities and calls FT.COM, Atari's file transfer software for use with the parallel I/O interface. The other utilities available from the Portman are a Port files to comma delimited format converter, a text file "unwrapper" and a PGC file viewer.

Both versions are fully functional, uncrippled, no pressure, entirely FREE demos of Portman to be used and enjoyed. These programs are really excellent!

PG9 - TIPI & PStuff

➢ **TIPI** - a 'Small Structured Programming Language for Palmtops'. The TIPI interpreter takes up less than 10K bytes of disk space and TIPI programs are similarly small. TIPI requires only 120K bytes of RAM and is thus well suited for palmtop computers such as the Atari Portfolio, the Poquet or the HP-95LX.

TIPI contains over 100 instructions and control structures including Do..Loop, While..Wend and Begin..Until Loops. TIPI also includes If..Then..Else and Case statements and an integrated debugger. TIPI is an extensible language, so programmers may add to the language as they see fit. Over twenty four sample programs are included.

➢ **PStuff** - is a unit of fast graphic/sprite routines for Atari Portfolio designed for Turbo Pascal 7 by Robert Quezada. Its main use is for high speed graphics and can be best utilised in game designing (as in the new games mentioned later in this section). The main features of the unit are:

- 32(8x7)sized-sprites(graftype)
- 240x200 scrollable screens
- Simulates Portfolio graphics on an IBM allowing for easy development of games on the IBM.

New Additions

Here are the new files which have been added to existing sets.

Applications

➢ **PICTO** - this is an exciting new addition to Set AP5. Picto is a graphical user interface for the Portfolio! Written by German

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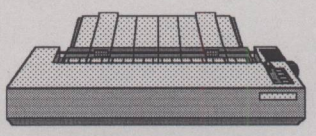
Portable Printer Impressions



As the name suggests, this article is not an in-depth review but rather a series of impressions of portable printers that readers have used with their Portfolios. We hope you find their observations helpful in trying to decide on the right portable printer for your Port.

Canon BJ-10ex

I bought this printer half a year ago and I feel it's one of the best printers you can get for the Port.

It comes with 37Kb input buffers (LQ mode 20KB), three different modes (Epson, IBM, Canon) and six different fonts (two in each mode). It is quite handy (12.2"x8.5"x1.9", weight 4.0lbs) and the noise level is under 45 dB(A). The printing characters have a composition of a 36x48 dot matrix in HQ mode and the graphic image has a resolution of 360 dpi. The BJ Cartridge has enough ink for printing 700 000 characters. (I still use the first one since more than half a year now).

All in all I'm very satisfied with this printer because the printout always looks good. It's just important that smooth paper is used and a lot of fun is guaranteed if you own a Port and that kind of printer.

Also it's quite easy to embed the printer-codes in a document. You can print double height, or double width, or both, italics, underlines, bold or condensed. Subscript and Superscript. (*For more information on embedding printer codes see Vol 1: Issue 5 and Vol 2: Issue 1 of The Portfolio Connection Newsletter - Ed)*

Ulrich Kieven

Kodak Diconix 150

The Kodak Diconix 150 is a portable inkjet printer measuring 11" x 6½" x 2" and weighing in at 3¾lbs including rechargeable batteries which are cleverly housed in the print roller. It also comes with an AC adapter which can be used to run the printer or recharge the internal batteries. The printer can handle 150 pages from a full charge although this reduces if the printer is not used continuously.

The Kodak Diconix has two fonts available in both draft and letter quality modes as well as superscript and subscript. The fonts are basic and functional. Resolution is 192 DPI (dots per inch) in letter quality mode and 96 DPI in draft mode. Letter quality produces an acceptable output which is further improved using embedded codes for double-strike or enhanced printing. It has both Epson and IBM emulations and is therefore compatible with most software.

The Diconix takes both single sheet and fanfold paper—this latter can be quite useful for draft work on the road. The cover has three positions:

- Closed - as well as protecting the platen when being transported it also has a paper guide slot to help prevent paper skewing when printing.
- Partially open - acts as a support for single sheets
- Fully open - acts as a guide for fanfold paper.

It is important to use good quality shiny paper to avoid smudging, which can ruin an otherwise acceptable output. The specifications say that the ink cartridge has sufficient ink to print 500 pages, although I have not put this to the test. Print quality deteriorates as the cartridge runs out. If you are in to printing in colours other than black, you will be pleased to know that cartridges are available in other colours.

In summary, although let down slightly by the lower font resolution, the Kodak Diconix is a good basic and functional portable printing solution for the Portfolio.

Peter Bennett

IBM 5183

Looking for a portable printer for use with my Portfolio during a trip to Australia, I stopped in Singapore and sampled, hands on, the various printers available and on sale there.

From a choice of six printers that could be described as portable, the printer I finally decided on was the IBM 5183. This printer is very small and portable, being about the same size as a 15 inch length of 4 inch by 2 inch timber. It's size means that I can carry the printer with it's mains battery charger/adaptor, 6 spare ribbons and 100 sheets of printer paper, the Portfolio with parallel interface, 6 memory cards, 2 spare sets of batteries and its mains adaptor, all in a standard brief case,

During my trip the printer was in daily use, printing a record of the trip and various other documentation, performing it's task without fault or failure. A total of 250 sheets of printing were produced and it is on this figure that the article has been based.

On return home I read a review casting doubt on the printer's paper feed but in my experience, although not up to large machine standard, it performed perfectly well and caused no concern if the paper was loaded according to the instruction book.

The printer has only 2 fonts and 6 pitches but for my purposes this is satisfactory and the printed page is very pleasant to the eye.

I found the thermal printing method, using a cassette ribbon, easy and clean to use. Although the cost of the ribbons work out at approximately 5 pence per printed sheet I find this compares favourably with the price of photocopying in your local print shop.

This printer is available under different company logos and, I presume, similar specifications.

I am in no way connected with the manufacturer and write this only to help those who are looking for a truly portable printer capable of producing printed pages having a professional look.

M.C. Deacon

Citizen PN48

I use a Citizen PN48 portable printer with my Port. It is a small, A4 sheet max, but more than adequate for what I require, the lack of a paper feeder is the only bind. The printer has a small footprint and so sits adjacent to the Port just behind the screen. I think it makes for a very neat setup.

Peter Webb

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Beginners Column

Following our look at the CONFIG.SYS last issue we move on this issue to the AUTOEXEC.BAT file as promised. We also include a tip from German reader Ulrich Kieven on inserting and deleting cards from address book cards.

The Autoexec.bat File

As we mentioned last issue, whenever the Portfolio is reset (also called a 'reboot'), it looks for two special files, one of which is the config.sys file and the other the autoexec.bat file. If they are present then the Portfolio uses the information in the files to configure itself rather than its own default settings.

On resetting, the Portfolio looks first for the Config.sys file and uses the information to set the date format, the number of files and the number of buffers to be used by the Portfolio. This was discussed in the last issue of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter. Having read the config.sys file, the Portfolio looks next for the autoexec.bat file if it is present. Unlike the config.sys file, which must be on drive c, the Portfolio will look first for the autoexec.bat file on drive a. If it does not find it there, it will then look for the autoexec.bat file on drive c. So far so good—but what does it do?

What the Autoexec.bat File is For

The autoexec.bat file has two main functions:

- ➢ It allows you to set certain aspects of the Portfolio's operating behaviour. This might include setting the DATE, TIME, PATH and the form of the DOS PROMPT (more about this later).
- ➢ It allows you to run certain programs automatically when you reset your Portfolio (e.g. running the applications menu or a password program).

As the names suggest, the DATE and TIME commands allow you to set the system date and time respectively. To do this the word TIME or DATE is added to a line in the autoexec.bat file. Although not so obvious, the PATH and PROMPT commands are also very useful.

Directories and The PATH Command

The PATH command is useful if you have a memory card and particularly if you make use of different DIRECTORIES on your a or c drives. For those of you who are unclear what directories are, it is useful to draw a comparison between the way a computer stores information and a filing cabinet.

Using this comparison, the basic Portfolio is like a single drawer filing cabinet with the single drawer named 'drive c'. If you have a memory card you have the equivalent of a two drawer filing cabinet with one drawer named 'drive c' and the other 'drive a'.

By the same comparison, DIRECTORIES are like the hanging file dividers found in each filing cabinet drawer. These dividers or directories contain files which may be data files such as text files or programs.

When the Portfolio is reset it creates two directories on drive c - the base or ROOT directory and the SYSTEM directory where it keeps its own information files. Similarly, when you format a memory card a single ROOT directory is created on drive a. If you type DIR (the 'list directory' command) on a Portfolio with no memory card and press enter, the first entry will read:

system <DIR>

This shows that the SYSTEM directory is present on drive c and may be followed by some file names such as the config.sys file you created last issue.

If you wish, you may create additional directories using the MD (make directory) command and some Portfolio users do this to keep their programs tidy on the computer. So, for instance, if you wanted to create a directory for your utility programs you could type:

MD UTILS

and press enter. This would create a new directory called UTILS on the drive. If you now did another DIR command, the readout would be as follows:

system <DIR>
utils <DIR>

plus any other files you may have on the drive.

The PATH Command

OK, back to the PATH command. Let us suppose that you have a password program in your newly created UTILS directory called 'password' (OK, OK - so its not original!). In order to run this program you would have to change to the UTILS directory using the CD (change directory) command:

CD UTILS (and press enter)

You would now be in c:\utils. Then type in the program name to run the program:

PASSWORD (and press enter).

If you are anywhere on the Portfolio apart from the UTILS directory (e.g. a:\, c:\, c:\system) then the Portfolio would not be able to find the PASSWORD program and put up a message reading:

'Bad command or program not found'

Obviously, changing directory every time you run a program could become quite tedious and this is where the PATH command is so useful. With the PATH command you instruct the Portfolio to look in a number of directories for programs. So the command:

Path=a:\;c:\;c:\utils

tells the Portfolio to look for programs in the root directories of drive a (a:\), drive c (c:\) and the utils directory on drive c (c:\utils). Notice how each path entry is separated by a semi-colon. If your UTILS directory was on your memory card (drive a) then the entry would be a:\utils (instead of c:\utils). Generally speaking you do not have to put the SYSTEM directory in the PATH statement as the Portfolio looks there automatically for its special files.

The DOS PROMPT

The DOS prompt is the c> (or a> if you have a memory card) which appears on the bottom line of the Portfolio screen along with the flashing cursor waiting for you to type in a command. The standard prompt is very basic and can be altered to give additional information using the PROMPT command. For example, using our example above of the UTILS directory: with the basic prompt if you are in the root directory of drive c: it will read c>, if you are in the UTILS directory it will read c> and if you are in the SYSTEM directory it will read c>, and so on. Thus it is easy to lose track of which directory you are in.

/Cont. on Page 9

Beginners Column Cont...

The DOS PROMPT cont.

However, the command:

Prompt=pg

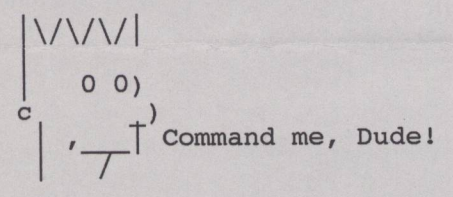
in the autoexec.bat file will change the DOS prompt to show the directory you are in. So now the root directory of drive c will have the prompt c:\>, the UTILS directory c:\utils> and the SYSTEM directory c:\system> which makes it much easier to find your way around. Similarly you can add the time, date and other information to the prompt. Each of the special characters must be preceded by the $ sign. Here are the special characters:

t - the current time
d - the current date
p - the current directory
v - the version number
n - the current drive
g - the '>' character
l - the '<' character
b - the '|' character
_ - a CR/LF sequence (i.e. drop to next line)
s - a null character
h - a backspace
e - ASCII escape
q - the '=' character

You can also add text but do not put the $ sign in front. Here are some PROMPT examples:

tb gives:	13:31:47:00| (if the time is 13:31)
dl gives:	Sat 1-01-1994<
v_pq gives:	DIP Operating System 2.11
	c:\= (where c:\ is current directory)
Hi There!$g gives:	Hi There!>

Altering the DOS prompt has become quite an art form in itself and Set GM3 - Games 3 contains some fine examples of complex DOS prompts including my favourite of Bart Simpson saying 'Command me, Dude!'. To give you an idea, it looks something like this:



Other Commands

You can also use the autoexec.bat file to load any programs you want to run automatically when you reset your Portfolio. An obvious example is a password program or, if you just use the built-in applications, the APP command. Another good example is the 'Update' program. To add these just enter the name of the program on a line of its own.

Creating the Autoexec.bat File

Here is how to create an autoexec.bat file:

- Enter the Portfolio editor using the APP menu, File Manager or holding down the red Atari key and pressing E.
- When in the editor, press the Atari key or hold down the blue Fn key and press 1 to bring up the FILE menu.
- Press F for file and N for new and should have a blank page to work on.
- Type in the line:
  path=a:\;c:\
  and any other directories you wish to add. Remember to separate each entry with a semi-colon. Then press the enter key.
- Type in the line:
  prompt=pg
  This will give you a prompt which shows drive and directory you are in. Choose any other variation you wish and then press enter.
- Add any additional programs you wish to run automatically e.g. APP to bring up the applications menu or PASSWORD if this is the name of your password program.
- Bring up the FILE menu again by pressing the Atari key.
- Press F for file and s for save
  In the box type:
  c:\autoexec.bat
  (or a:\autoexec.bat if you have a memory card)
  and press enter. This will save the file to your c: (or a:) drive. You now have a working autoexec.bat file and you can stop here and use the Esc key to exit from the editor.

Running the Autoexec.bat file

If you remember, I said earlier that the Portfolio looks for the autoexec.bat file only when it is rebooted. Thus, to make the Portfolio read your new autoexec.bat file you must now reboot the computer by holding down the Ctrl and Alt keys and pressing the Del key.

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Adding and Deleting Lines in Address Book Cards

The following is a documentation of a trick as to how to insert or delete lines in a card from the built-in *.adr application, sent to us by Ulrich Kieven in Köln, Germany:

"The key to it is the clipboard which is available when the F3 key is pressed. If you wish to insert a line, in one *.adr card, you first have to load any editor-file. Then you activate the clipboard by pressing <F3> and just copy any sign or letter into it. After that you load your address-file.

Then you select the card you like to edit and bring the cursor to the beginning of that line, on top of which the new one has to be. Again you call-in the clipboard and select paste and the new line is inserted. For a block-copy you store a couple of lines in the clipboard, the rest is the same.

To delete a line in a card without having the empty line there, select "cut" in the clipboard-menu, after the cursor has been positioned at the beginning of the line which should be erased.

I hope you find it useful. It's a documentation you can't find in the users manual. I needed a couple of months to get the trick. In the beginning I used to delete the whole card!!!"

Ulrich Kieven

That's all for this issue - more next time...

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The New German Super-RAM Cards!

Cheap Portfolio RAM Card Storage at Last—Can it be True?

In our News section, we reported on some new RAM cards designed by German engineer Andreas Göbel. What makes these RAM cards special is the price—from £60 for a 128k card to just £85 for a 384k card!

We were sent a 384k card to review—having been excited to hear about these cards, would they deliver the goods in practice?

It's Like Three Cards in One...

Our sample, a 384k battery card, has three onboard 128k RAM chips, the 256k card has two and the 128k card has one. One problem with high-capacity cards for the Portfolio is that the Port itself was only designed to address RAM card memory 128k at a time. Therefore cards with over 128k have to 'fool' the Port into thinking they are only 128k cards. This is usually achieved by arranging the memory into 128k 'pages'.

The new cards manage to overcome this problem both neatly and cheaply. The 128k chips remain separate and the user switches between each chip manually. It is, in effect like having three 128k cards in one!

The Four Switch Shuffle

The switching on the new cards is achieved by a small DIP switch built in to the card. The card itself is the size of a conventional RAM card and fits flush into the Portfolio. The small DIP switch box has been cleverly placed to fit snugly into the recess on the left hand front edge of the Port.

The switch unit itself has four numbered switches, initially in the 'off' position. The switches are small but can be toggled using a pen tip or fingernail. The first switch offers a write protect function—data can only be written to the card when it is in the 'on' position. The remaining three switches are used to switch to RAM chips one, two and three respectively.

It is important that only one chip is switched on at a time—two or more chips switched on is likely to confuse the card and give scrambled directories and files.

Another important thing to remember is to switch off the card after use by setting all the DIP switches to off—otherwise the battery will drain very quickly! The battery itself is a 3V BR1216 or CR1216 lithium battery which should have a life of about a year (as long as you remember to switch it off after use!).

Using The Card

The card itself is easy to use and appears to all intents and purposes like a conventional 128k card to the machine. Switching between chips can be quickly and easily achieved while the card is still in the Portfolio, which has the effect of making the full 384k very available to the user.

All of the DIP DOS commands work with the card just as they would for a conventional card. With the help of B J Gleason's 'copy1.com' (in Set UT1), it is even possible to copy files between chips. If, for instance, I wanted to copy the file address.adr from chip 3 to chip 2, I would enter the command:

Copy1 address.adr

The program puts up a message to change cards and switches the Port off. I then simply switch off chip 3 and switch on chip 2, press a key and address.adr is transferred.

Stylish Packaging?

At present, the packaging of the card leaves something to be desired—it is basically the circuit board wrapped in blue plastic. The end is sealed by a piece of blue tape which makes changing the battery tricky. However, our test sample was an early model and we have recently been informed that the Mk2 version is on its way, featuring a 'very clean high-tech design'. Obviously, producing the cards in greater numbers will allow a more professional finish at the same low cost.

Summary

So how do the scales balance out for these new cards? On the plus side we have a high capacity RAM card which is truly low cost—384k for less than the conventional 128k card—but which retains the ease of use of conventional RAM cards (no messing around with 'Clean' programs etc.).

On the minus side we have sub-standard packaging and the inconvenience of having to switch from one chip to another. Given that the new Mk2 version will have a professional finish, there is no doubt in my mind that these new cards are a real winner! These cards just have to be the best value around at the moment, offering a useful capacity for a very reasonable outlay.

Ordering Details...

The capacitor cards mentioned in the News section are no longer available as the particular capacitors needed have been discontinued. However, the battery cards are moving from strength to strength and can be obtained from Stefan Kächele, the supplier of the Portfolio upgrade manual.

The Upgrade Manual Order Form on Page 16 of this issue gives the address at which Stefan can be contacted.

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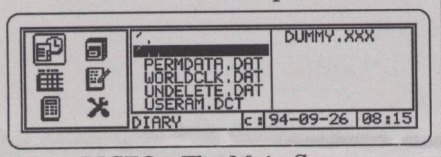
New this Issue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

➢ **PICTO** cont. - author Christian Peter in Swift Basic, it allows you to access the built-in applications by means of well-designed icons. in addition it offers basic file maintenance commands such as copy, rename, delete etc. This program shows, once more, just what the humble Port is capable of!



PICTO - The Main Screen

Games

This issue sees some really professional and exciting new games which have been added to Set GM4.

➢ **Tetris** - another version of Tetris. This German program uses the vertical screen rather than the horizontal screen used by many versions of Tetris for the Portfolio. As a result the display is smaller but the game plays much faster.

➢ **Gewinn4** - this version of 'Connect 4' is also written by a German author. Although the instructions are in German, it is very easy to play and is a particularly good version of a popular game.

These next three games have been written with the PStuff Turbo Pascal Unit described under Set PG9 earlier. They are fast and impressive.

➢ **Punkman** - this is the full, free version of the shareware version described in Vol. 2 issue 3. It is fast, with a unique scrolling screen and also includes a board designer.

➢ **Crashbal** - this is a version of the popular 'Breakout' game using the same scrolling screen technique as found in Punkman above. Certain bricks when hit make your paddle small or 'sticky'etc.

➢ **Tehtra** - yet another version of Tetris. Good, but not as outstanding as Punkman and Crashbal.

Finally, we have a platform arcade type game designed specifically for the Portfolio:

➢ **Walls** - this exciting adventure platform game is devilishly hard but very addictive! There are fortresses, keys and gems to collect and monsters and traps to avoid. I love playing it, but have yet to get beyond level 1!

Our last addition this month is by yet another German author and is a real scoop for the Portfolio! It can be found in Set CM1.

➢ **PTerm** - is yet another terminal program for the Portfolio. What makes PTerm different however, is the presence of the ZModem file transfer protocol which is both faster and more reliable than the usual Xmodem protocol found on Portfolio Coms programs. This is a shareware version with file transfers restricted to no more than 5k in size.

Update Set

For those of you who have already bought some of the sets mentioned above, all of the programs mentioned in this issue's "New Additions" section are available in:

Set UP6 - Update 6

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Classifieds

➢ **For Sale: Atari Portfolio 128K**, Parallel Interface, cable & spare battery, leather case plus Utilities, PC Applications, File Manager & Sigma Press programmes. All contained in it's own briefcase. Also PC card drive. The lot complete for £95 plus postage. Books available - The Portfolio Companion (Baron), Complete Guide to the Portfolio (Mueller), Beginners Guide to the Portfolio (Thomas). £6.50 each or £15 the set of three. Phone Mike Staite 0242 517722.

➢ **For Sale: Portfolio** Dos 2.11 V.1.052 with Instruction Manual, Sigma Press software disc and Universal Power Pack. Can post at cost. Bargain £49. Tel daytime 0704 879171, ask for Gavin.

➢ **For Sale: Serial Interface** and cable £40. 128K Memory card £60. Tel daytime 051 227 1546, Tim Butler.

➢ **For Sale: DIP Pocket PC, 512KB**, with mains unit, memory cards (128K and 32K), Parallel Interface, Transfer Cable, PC disk, complete PC Card Drive for data exchange with PC, many issues of "The Portfolio Connection Newsletter", "Wordprocessing" and "Utilities" on disks, "Swift Basic" on card with ring-bound user manual. Also "Portfolio Companion", "An Advanced Guide to the Portfolio", "Complete Guide to the Portfolio" and "Complete Beginner's Guide". Buyer collects otherwise post extra. £300. Phone John Evans 0543 414078.

➢ **For Sale: 256K Memory Expander Plus** with 2nd Memory card slot £60. "Stocks" Stock Market Game by Autobyte on ROM card £10. Both with manuals. Ring Andy Cooper 081 894 0346.

➢ **For Sale: Atari Portfolio** with manual and AC Adaptor £70. Serial Interface £25. Memory Expander Plus £50. COMPAX advanced memory card 128K £50. Parallel transfer cable £5. Parallel printer cable £5. ST Transfer pack, software and cable £10. BSE Universal Interface, 0kb £50. "Complete Guide to the Portfolio" (Mueller) £7.50. Phone Jeff Shepherd 0379 651640.

➢ **For Sale: Parallel Interface** with software and cable £25. Phone N. Haddy 0246 862718.

➢ **Wanted: PC Card Drive** or 3½" Handydisk. Ring Andy Cooper 081 894 0346.

➢ **Wanted: Swift ST Link** for about £25. N. Gani, 79, Waterloo Road, London, SE1 8UD

The Portfolio Connection Newsletter Classifieds are FREE. Send your advert to :

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Grand Finishing Sale!

✸A last chance to snap up some Portfolio Bargains✸

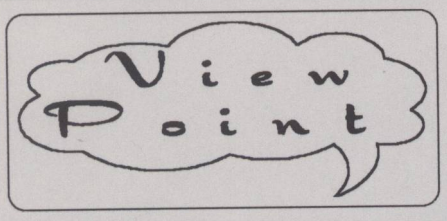
Here is a chance to get some of those Portfolio items you have been meaning to buy *and* make a tidy saving into the bargain! We are selling off our remaining stock at bargain prices which are too good to miss. Check out the list below and get your order off straight away as we'll only be able to accept orders until Monday 10th October!

*As always, all prices include VAT & P+P	Sale Price*	RRP*	Savings
New Hardware			
Atari Portfolio - one only	**£89.95**	£155.04	**£65.09**
Atari 128k Standard Memory Card - one only	**£69.95**	£135.07	**£65.12**
512k Memory Upgrade for BSE Interface - one only	**£65.00**	£120.00	**£55.00**
Parallel Interface and File Transfer Software - one only	**£35.00**	£45.77	**£10.77**
AC Adaptor - four only	**£8.95**	£14.05	**£5.10**
Parallel Printer Cable - one only	**£8.95**	£12.87	**£3.92**
Parallel File Transfer Cable - three only	**£8.95**	£12.87	**£3.92**
Arlink Fast File Transfer Cable - two only	**£9.95**	£14.10	**£4.15**
Serial Transfer Cable - one only	**£9.95**	£14.10	**£4.15**
New Software			
Compax PDB Database - one only	**£30.00**	£62.45	**£32.45**
Compax PortGraph: print and display graphs - one only	**£30.00**	£62.45	**£32.45**
Slave Plus & Master PC - Serial transfer Port to PC - one only	**£40.00**	£90.10	**£50.10**
Atari Instant Speller - one only	**£25.00**	£39.95	**£14.95**
DIP PC Applications Software - one only	**£25.00**	£50.47	**£25.47**
Second-hand Bargains			
PC Card Drive	**£20.00**		
Portfolio PowerBasic Card	**£45.00**		
DOS Utilities Card	**£15.00**		

As you can see, there are some real bargains here—but remember—your order *must* be in by Monday 10th October. Orders will be dealt with on a 'first come first serve' basis.

ShareWare Sell-out!

Here is your chance to get those shareware sets you have been wanting before it is too late and at a price you can afford! Until our last order date of Monday 10th October, all of our shareware sets will be just £2.00 each! Due to the special nature of this offer, our 'buy four and get one free' offer will no longer apply. Remember, this may be your last chance to get the software you need for your Portfolio…



Readers' Letters and Tips

This issue we have some general 'Portfolio thoughts' from one of our readers. There are also letters concerning the chip needed to build the custom cable for parallel ST Transfer using ST-Folio (from Set ST3), and availability of PBasic manuals.

Dear Ed

As I've had a Portfolio for over 3 years now, I thought my fellow users would be interested in some of my experiences with it.

The printer I use with it is the CANON BJ-10e & Auto-Sheetfeeder with which it works fine. You have to set up the DIP switches of course on the printer including CR with no linefeed (select this in the computer printer setup menu). The parallel interface and cable connects between computer & printer, obviously.

I also use my "Port" with a FAX machine! In my case, an Amstrad FX9600AT which has a parallel centronics interface on the back. To send a Fax, from the computer you just create your letter in the Text Editor as usual, press Print to send it to the Fax machine instead of a normal printer, dial your Fax number and send! You may have to play around a bit with the margin settings on the "Port" to get things to appear as in a business letter printed as hard-copy. Also I can get the Fax machine to print out a hard-copy of my message first so that I can see what I'm about to Fax to someone! Again you are using the "Port's" parallel interface & cable. On this Fax machine there is also the facility to add your signature to your faxed letters.

In the last year I have graduated to a 386SXL Notebook PC. But still find my "Port" very handy for note-taking/address book etc. when I'm away on business, because of its portability and very good keyboard (for its size). The keyboard on rival, so called better machines like the Psion Series 3 is just awful in comparison. After I get back from a business trip I just file transfer to my other computer.

You may also be interested to know that I took my "Port" to Poland a couple of years back where it met with a lot of astonished wonderment! Incidentally there appears to be quite a large following for the machine because I was looking at a Polish computer magazine ("BAJTEK") and there were several articles about the "Port" and technical information, although my Polish language is not very good but I got my (non-technical) Polish wife to translate for me.

I hope you find these notes of use to you and my fellow readers of "The Portfolio Connection".

With Best Wishes

Edward Stainton

...Thank you for the notes on your use of the Portfolio. The excellent Canon BJ10 printer is given a mini review on Page 7 of this issue.

We have heard of the Port being used to send faxes by printing directly to an Amstrad FX series fax machine. The versatility of the Portfolio seems to know no bounds!

We can only agree with your comments on the portability and keyboard of the Portfolio—you really can slip it into a pocket and the keyboard is still one of the best to be found on a palmtop. We would also add that the display, whilst being limited in view to 8 lines by 40 characters, is one of the most readable of all palmtops because of using a large font size. This makes all the difference when viewing in dim lighting conditions.

The Portfolio is still popular in many parts of Europe. Along with Poland we also have Czechoslovakia, Germany and Holland.

Editor

Dear Ed

You may like to know that the 74HC125 integrated circuits are still available. I have recently purchased a couple, and am in the process of building the interface—will let you know of the outcome. The chips are available from:

ESD Electronic Services
Tel: (0272) 290125 & Fax: (0272) 264079
(Also in other areas)

Details as follows -

Standard Package (14 pin DIL):

Man/ident	ESD code	Cost	Stock
Texas Instruments			
74HC125	002480C	0.407	NIL
Philips			
PC74HC125P	405698D	0.907	STK
Motorola			
MC74HC125AN	005159F	0.88	STK
Surface Mount:			
Philips			
PC74HC125T	056980	0.639	NIL
TEXAS Instruments			
SN74HC125D	090620H	0.347	NIL

Please note that the prices do not include VAT or P&P (for small quantities I was charged £1.90).

John Mayo

...Thanks for letting us know about the availability of these chips. If you look in the News section on Page 4, you will find the corrections needed to make a working parallel ST-Folio cable.

Editor

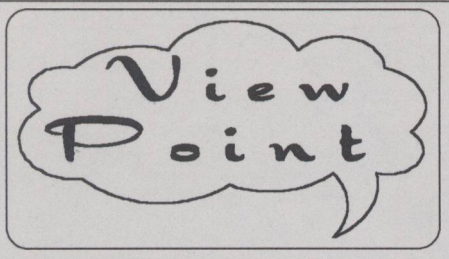
Dear Ed

I am interested in purchasing the PBasic Manual, but before I commit myself to this, could you send me a copy so I can assess the format etc. of the book.

Mr R Guryn

...Unfortunately, the promised comb-bound manual for PBasic was never produced. We do, however, have a few good quality, laser-printed copies of the PBasic 4.9 manual in a three ring binder which were supplied to us by BSE. These are available for £7.50 including P+P, but hurry as there are only a few left...

/Cont. on Page 14



Readers' Letters and Tips Cont.

Dear Ed

I thought I would contribute to your ever so on going CASES-for-the-PORT debate:

I use the HEWLETT PACKARD Carrying Case which you can purchase for the fantastic H.P. portable Deskjet 310 colour printer. The case measures approx. 30 cm x 45 cm x 20 cm and has an opening on either side.

One side can hold the printer and cut sheet feeder (one unit when assembled), psu and accessories like battery charger and rechargeable battery, print cartridges and A4 paper.

The other side can hold a notebook or four PORTS, so enough room for the PORT, parallel and serial interface, ARLINK, parallel and serial cables, psu, batteries, memory cards by the dozen, pens and so forth. It features three biggish pockets and one smallish pocket on the inside lid.

Outside the case you will find Velcro pockets on either side. Those can hold small books like Peter Baron's or the PORT's manuals. The case is made of soft, good quality vinyl, features a hand grip and detachable shoulder strap, is very lightweight and has six plastic feet.

I think this case is a perfect solution for the PORT + a printer, take it wherever you go, set up both anywhere without any use of electricity and you're ready for some serious Wordprocessing.

The price for the carrying case? A mere £80.00.

Thomas Holzer

...Thank you for your enthusiastic comments on the Hewlett Packard case. It certainly seems like a good solution if you travel a lot and need to carry a lot of Portfolio equipment around with you—a sort of Portfolio Power User as it were. However, I can't help thinking that the price tag might put off all but the most dedicated Portfolio users!

Editor

Dear Ed

I went to the ATARI show on Sunday 31 July 1994 at NOVOTEL in London. I guessed the show would be very good if you are into ST's and FALCONS but on one stand I found some serious PORT stuff. There was the DIP Modem, the DIP Mac transfer thingy, the DIP 256k interface and a few cards, mainly cheque writing. Then I saw it, *Atari Portfolio Chess*, still shrink-wrapped. I couldn't believe it when I asked the man behind the counter 'How much?' and he answered £5.00 each! £5.00 for the Atari Portfolio Chess, can you believe it?? He also had Linkscard, a golf companion program, for £5 so I bought that as well.

The PORT CHESS is excellent. I feared it may not work on my old Port, but it does and I am really hooked, playing it for hours. If you want a review on any of the cards, let me know.

Thomas

...£5 for Portfolio ROM cards has to be the scoop of the year. We are familiar with Atari Chess but not the Linkscard. As you say, the Chess Card is excellent and very comprehensive. I'm not a great player but I could not get past level two of its ten levels. Oh and yes, of course we'd be happy to receive a review of the cards!

Editor

Dear Ed

I am writing to tell you about a new disk magazine to be called The Atari STar, which I and a partner are setting up.

Although the magazine will centre on the Atari ST family of computers it is my intention, as the name suggests, to give coverage to all of Atari's 'stars'. Recently I purchased a Portfolio and I'm now very fond of the machine. I will be running a Portfolio section of the magazine and it is my aim to make this section as large as possible, every issue. I intend to write general Portfolio articles, for instance my own unfortunate experiences, as well as review PD and Hardware.

We would be grateful if you could mention The Atari STar in your newsletter. Unfortunately, a firm date cannot yet be given for the release of the first issue, however I will make sure you are kept up to date on our progress.

Michael Herman (co-editor, The Atari STar)

...Thanks for letting us know about your new venture—we are more than happy to give a mention to anyone willing to broaden the range of Portfolio-related information available to Port users. We wish you every success with the disk-based magazine and hope to hear more about the release of the first issue soon.

Editor

Dear Ed

I now have the ability to move files using the parallel file transfer program ST_FOLIO. My thanks to the efforts of K Warrender in resolving the problems. Incidentally, my Atari STFM has a TOS version 1.2.

The program however has two inherent weaknesses. First it lacks the ability of using wildcards, requiring the selection and transfer of one file at a time. Secondly, the directory will only hold up to 44 files, returning an error message, and occasionally crashing when I tried to access the 70 odd in my "A" drive. One unexpected bonus was the ability to load a 17k file, both ways, between the Atari and the Portfolio.

Neither of the above problems is insurmountable but it does call into question the usefulness of the program, and this in itself is a disappointment since it utilises the existing features of the Portfolio file transfer system, thus saving the requirement of an extra transfer program.

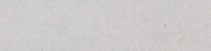
John Mayo

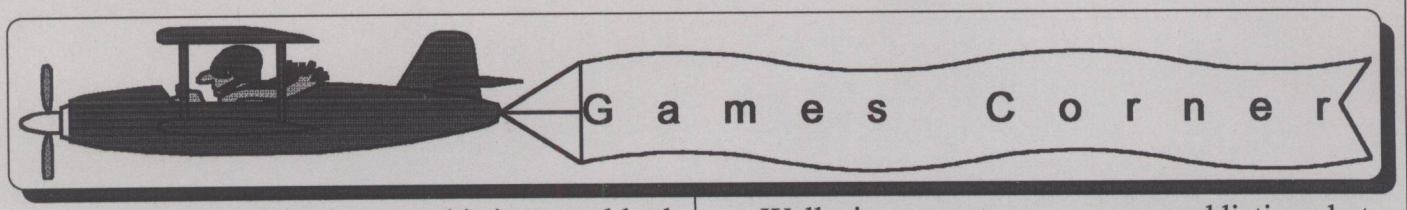
...Thanks for pointing out these limitations and bonuses of the ST_Folio program. It should be remembered that this program is a free shareware pilot for the more comprehensive ST Link which followed later. However, it is a shame than Atari did not make greater provision for user-friendly ST-Portfolio transfer.

Editor

Send your letters/tips to our new address:

The Portfolio Connection
P.O. Box 97
Wallingford
Oxfordshire
OX10 0EB





A double helping of games this issue and both of them promising to be blockbusters! They can both be found in Set GM4.

Walls

Walls is a great 'jump and run' platform game for the Portfolio written by the German author Ingo Naumann. It represents a real treat for Portfolio games fans. The program is just under 7k in size but houses a vast landscape full of gems, monsters, castles, hidden traps and, of course, walls! This version is Freeware but Version 2.00 can be obtained by sending a $20 donation.

The controls for the game are quite straightforward and use the following keys:

Q - Up, A - Down, O - Left, P - Right

There are no other instructions with the game but the object appears to be to collect all the gems scattered at intervals around the 'map'. Often the

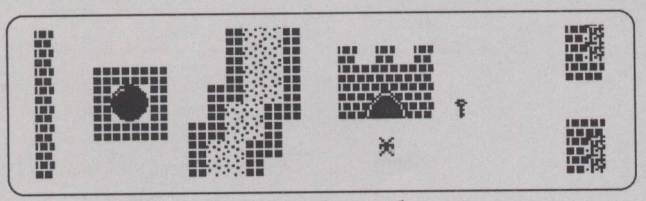


Fig 1 - Walls: at the castle entrance...

gems are hidden behind a wall and a key is needed to 'remove' a section of the wall so that the gem can be collected. However, if you are not quick enough you can become trapped behind the wall as the section closes again (see fig 2)!

There are also mazes which constantly move and change, eventually trapping you if you don't get through quick enough, along with spaces

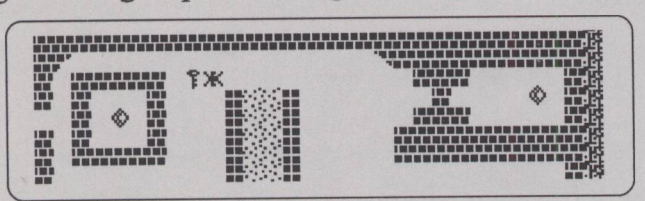


Fig 2 - Taking this key opens entrances to both gems, but you have to be quick to get them both before they close to trap you!

which slowly fill with blocks as you move through. Some areas are open and in other parts of game you move through long tunnels - sometimes only to discover that it is a dead end. Aaargh!

Still other gems are guarded by monsters that are very fast and will catch you if you are not quick enough.

Walls is a great game—very addictive, but also tantalisingly difficult. I have yet to get past level 1!

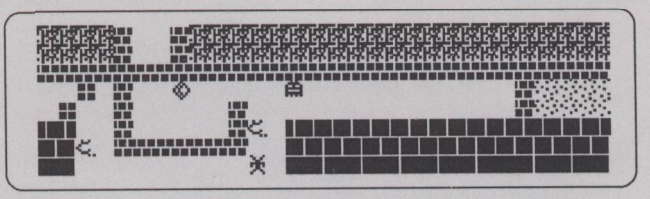


Fig 3 - Oh No! Another monster

Crashball

Crashball is a conventional 'breakout' type game for the Portfolio, written by Robert Quezada. What makes it different is a unique 'scrolling screen' feature which allows for a larger screen size which scrolls up and down as needed. The same effect can be found in the game 'Punkman' and uses the Turbo Pascal routines found in Robert's PStuff TPU (see Page 6).

The graphics routines are fast which make for a more than acceptable playing speed and the game also features special 'bricks' in the breakout

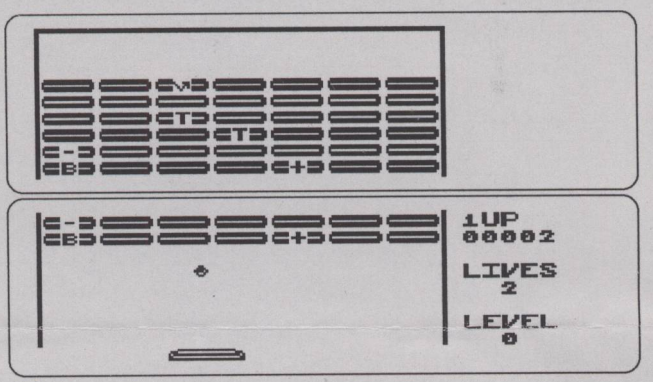


Fig 3 - two screen shots placed together to show the range of the scrolling screen

wall which, when hit, give rise to certain changes—some which help and some which don't! The special bricks are marked and have the following effects:

B : makes your bat grow
T : makes your bat shrink
S : makes your bat sticky
+ : speeds the ball up
- : slows the ball down
↗ : the ball rebounds even if you miss it

Crashball is another great Portfolio game which will keep gaming enthusiasts happy for hours!

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

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3. How to increase the internal backup power (without batteries) to more than 48hrs.

4. How to use the parallel interface and PBASIC as an I/O interface

The Upgrade Manual gives full details, in-depth descriptions, two colour photos, schematics on how to connect all additional electronic components and a list of distributors. Although the upgrades mentioned above are described in detail, the manual is NOT for anyone who isn't an experienced (do-it-yourself) electronic. (But if you don't want to do the upgrade yourself maybe you could give the manual to someone who is technically inclined and let him do the job.)

Price per manual:

£20.00 (incl. one 6.5MHz-quartz and carriage within Europe.)
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